

Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision



DRAFT

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A Letter from the County Executive

"This document sets the foundation for the creation of a downtown that connects our community, respects the environment, balances growth, and includes everyone."



Dear Neighbor,

As a lifelong resident of Howard County and Columbia, I am excited to see two years of public effort and discussion culminate in *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*. I am committed to Jim Rouse's dream of a better city and have worked countless days and nights with citizens and County planners to further that dream. This document honors these efforts, and I encourage every person in Howard County to read and reflect on its content. It was prepared for you— it is a vision for our future.

As we approach the second anniversary of the Columbia Charrette, there is no better way to commemorate the beginning of this community-driven process than to release this important document, designed to be the necessary framework to achieve a town center that preserves Columbia's character and reflects the spirit in which the community was founded. This document sets the foundation for the creation of a downtown that connects our community, respects the environment, balances growth, and includes everyone. A year ago on the first anniversary of the Downtown Columbia Charrette, I made a promise to work with you to shape the vision for our future. This is the fulfillment of that promise.

Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision is intended to stimulate discussion and to be shared with all Howard residents. As our most important stakeholders, you will have several opportunities to share your thoughts and opinions at a series of outreach events, designed to provide forums for feedback on this document. Below, you will find a tentative schedule of outreach events where *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*, and related information, will be presented and discussed.

October 10, 2007 - Presentation to the Columbia Downtown Focus Group

October 11, 2007 - Presentation of traffic analysis by Sabra, Wang & Associates

October 20, 2007 - Presentation to the Columbia Association and Columbia's Village Boards, followed by the first community open house, hosted by the Department of Planning and Zoning

October 25, 2007 - Second community open-house

October 30, 2007 - Public Forum

It is my sincere hope that you find inspiration and new ideas in these pages. Thank you for your role in the creation of the vision for a revitalized town center.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Ken Ulman', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ken Ulman

County Executive

A Letter from the Planning Director

"Your feedback is needed on how well this document expresses community desires and where refinements are needed."



To All County Citizens,

The Department of Planning & Zoning has sifted through a tremendous volume of citizen input to prepare this document, *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*. It is a **draft** and articulates what we believe are community consensus points at this time, regarding the future of Downtown Columbia.

This document presents the vision, in terms of five themes, molded from the extensive discussions over the last two years. Each of the themes is further articulated in vision statements – a total of 23 in all. Your feedback is needed on how well this document expresses community desires and where refinements are needed. The final chapter outlines the framework for achieving the community's vision. We look forward to your responses, and to working with you to reach our common goals for Downtown Columbia.

Thank you for taking the time to read *Downtown Columbia: A Community Vision*. I hope you will have the time to attend one or all of the events that are being scheduled in October to provide information, answer questions, and solicit your comments.

If at any time you have a question or would like to discuss this document, please feel free to contact Bill Mackey at 410-313-2350 to schedule a meeting. You may also want to visit the County's website for updates anytime day or night. Please visit us at www.howardcountymd.gov/downtowncolumbia

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marsha S. McLaughlin".

Marsha S. McLaughlin

Director

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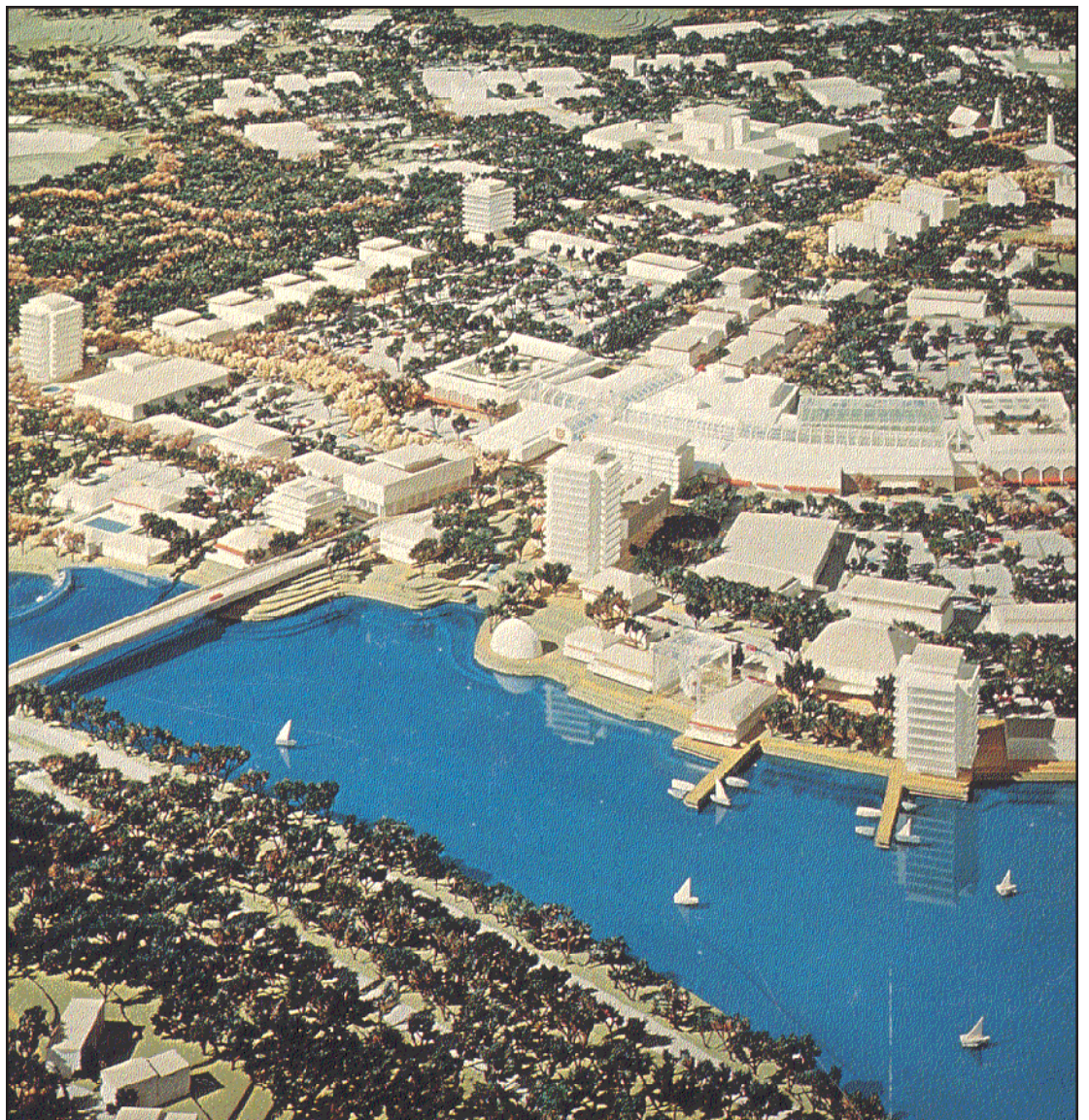
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Introduction



Introduction

"We have in our hands the opportunity to make our city - in our generation - the most livable, the most beautiful, and the most effective city in America."

Jim Rouse



This document provides a vision for Downtown Columbia as it grows and evolves over the coming years.

From its inception, much was expected of Columbia, and this is still true today, over forty years later. Unlike many other communities - planned or otherwise - Columbia is more than just a collection of buildings, a center for commerce or a place for residents to rest their heads at night. Columbia is, and always has been, a community built on principles, ideals, a shared vision and, perhaps most importantly, the belief that, in founder Jim Rouse's words, "what ought to be, can be."

Although not perfect, Columbia has demonstrated that seemingly lofty goals are certainly within reach. Columbia has lived up to Rouse's goals in almost every respect: it enjoys tremendous diversity in people; it includes thousands of acres of open space; it has been a financial success; and it has produced a community of residents who are concerned, informed, dedicated and hardworking.

Today, forty years after Columbia's first "pioneers" moved in and more than ten years since Jim Rouse's passing, Columbia and its residents are looking to the future and wondering where the community is headed. While there is much that Rouse and the company he founded did right in crafting Columbia, there is room for improvement. Downtown Columbia, in particular, has yet to capture the essence of the city envisioned by Rouse and desired by residents.

At no time was this more apparent than October 2005, when community members participating in the Downtown charrette, the most inclusive planning exercise in Howard County history, shared their thoughts and concerns about Downtown Columbia today and what they hoped it could become in the future. After the weeklong series of intensive meetings and public forums during the charrette, the downtown discussion continued in formal, public settings - such as community forums, focus group meetings and on the letters pages of newspapers - as well as more informal and private ones - such as emails, messages to listservs, coffee houses and elsewhere. In total, hundreds of people added their voices to the dialogue about Columbia's downtown, and from this collection of visions, common themes and goals emerged.

Charrette participants discuss their visions for Columbia's future.



Residents desire a vibrant, active downtown full of a diverse mix of uses, amenities, attractions and transportation options. They also seek a city center that embodies the values and principles that have guided the first forty years of this community. Indeed, because Columbia has enjoyed thoughtful, ground-breaking development over the last forty years, residents rightly expect that future development in Downtown will follow the same general, albeit updated, model.

Approach

The public discourse on Downtown Columbia has shown a clear and strong consensus for a livelier Downtown, but there are also broad concerns about infrastructure capacity, building heights, housing affordability and other issues. A new plan for development in Columbia must reflect the community's priorities and adequately address its concerns.

Accordingly, the process to achieve the community's goals for Downtown Columbia will involve three principle steps. As part of the first step, the Department of Planning and Zoning offers this thematic document, which serves two purposes: (1) to describe a vision for Downtown Columbia, highlighting the themes that have emerged through public dialogue over the course of the past two years and (2) to establish a framework that will provide guidance for General Growth Properties (GGP), the major property owner in Downtown, as they prepare a downtown development master plan for public review and approval.

The second step will be GGP's proposal of a downtown development master plan. GGP has engaged a nationally-renowned consulting team to help prepare a downtown development master plan and is expected to present this plan to the public in the near future. GGP would formally propose their plans by requesting both a General Plan amendment

to adopt the downtown development master plan and a corresponding zoning regulation amendment (ZRA) which would enable implementation of the downtown development master plan. This second step follows the tradition of the New Town zoning process wherein the original petitioner initiates proposed changes in Columbia.

The third step involves public review and testimony on the proposed amendments before the Planning Board and County Council. Ultimately, the County Council will make the final decisions on the General Plan and Zoning Regulation amendments.

Public participation will be an essential contribution to each of the three steps outlined for this approach. This document provides a framework for the dialogue among the applicant that submits a downtown development master plan, the County Council which will consider the plan and the community that the plan will serve.

A compact, walkable Downtown Columbia that includes green space is a shared goal.



Key Components

In order for Downtown Columbia to be successful, there must be an appropriate balance of three key components – the amenities that contribute to quality of life, the amount of development, and the transportation infrastructure. These factors are interrelated and interdependent and should therefore be coordinated.



A vibrant Downtown must balance social amenities, traffic and development.

Amenities. New amenities are desired by the community. These include interconnected sidewalks, public art, attractive streetscapes, gathering places, preserved natural spaces, and a variety of retail, restaurant, artistic, entertainment and community-based opportunities.

Development. Additional commercial and residential development is needed to increase vibrancy and support these amenities. Increased foot traffic, especially from new residents living in Downtown, is a key factor in the success of artists' and other local businesses. Additional density also provides funding for transportation improvements, and affordable housing can be subsidized through the construction of new, market-rate housing.

Transportation Improvements. New transportation improvements are needed to access the new amenities and new development. At the County's request, a detailed traffic study has been prepared by the firm of Sabra, Wang & Associates, Inc. to address traffic capacity and multimodal approaches to downtown transportation. A summary of the report is included in Appendix B.

Since development costs will be borne primarily by GGP as Downtown's major property owner, it is appropriate that GGP propose the levels of commitment that they are willing to bear for new amenities, expanded infrastructure capacity and the associated supporting development. The appropriate balance among these improvements, however, should reflect the vision of this framework and strive to meet its goals.

The Lakefront with its civic amenities and many original buildings remains the heart of Downtown Columbia.

Vision Summary

This framework is organized around five themes that emerged from the extensive input by the public during the charrette, the Downtown Columbia Focus Group meetings and from independent groups and individual citizens who have contributed to the planning process. These groups include Howard County Citizens' Association, Columbia Association, Town Center village board, Wilde Lake village board, Oakland Mills village board, Harper's Choice village board, the Coalition for Columbia's Downtown (CCD), Bring Back the Vision, Howard County Tomorrow and others.

The themes are organized around two broad categories: Vision and Process. The first three - the Vision themes - serve as extensions of Jim Rouse's original goals for Columbia - a reaffirmation of the community's founding principles and shared values. The last two - the Process themes - outline a planning and development process necessary to achieving the vision for Downtown Columbia.

Vision Themes

1. Making a Special Place
2. Moving and Connecting People
3. Sustaining the Environment

Process Themes

4. Balancing and Phasing Growth
5. Involving Everyone

The five themes and their associated vision statements are listed below to provide a summary of this framework document. Each of the five themes is addressed in detail in the five chapters that follow.





Downtown serves as a commercial hub for the County. The shops and offices contribute to the County's economic health and improve its regional reputation.

Making a Special Place

Theme 1: Downtown Columbia will be a diverse, mixed-use, livable, physically distinctive and human-scaled place with a range of housing choices and recreational, civic and cultural amenities.

1.1 Continue and enhance Jim Rouse's vision of Columbia as a thriving, socially responsible and environmentally friendly place for people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds.

1.2 Conserve symbols of Columbia's past found throughout the Downtown area, recognizing that they contribute to the authentic character of Downtown and reinforce its qualities as a special place.

1.3 Shape new development to form well-defined districts within Downtown; orient structures to the street, making them inviting to pedestrians; and establish height limits appropriate to each district's character.

1.4 Design a variety of Downtown commercial activities that complement nearby Oakland Mills and Wilde Lake village centers, recognizing the identity of each.

1.5 Provide a full spectrum of housing, ensuring that low-, moderate- and middle-income families have an opportunity to live in Downtown, thus continuing the original vision of Columbia as an inclusive community.

1.6 Support Downtown's function as a major financial and economic center that contributes to its distinctive identity as the Downtown for Columbia and for Howard County.

1.7 Expand civic and community facilities to augment Columbia's nationally recognized quality of life.



Streets in Downtown need to be pedestrian friendly and provide good access for bicycles and motorized vehicles.

Public spaces will help create "a city in a park" atmosphere, and help sustain both social and environmental values.

1.8 Enhance art and cultural offerings, providing new spaces and opportunities for an active arts community and for public art.

1.9 Improve the design of Downtown buildings through design guidelines and a design review panel to ensure that buildings, streets and public spaces will be aesthetically pleasing.

Moving and Connecting People

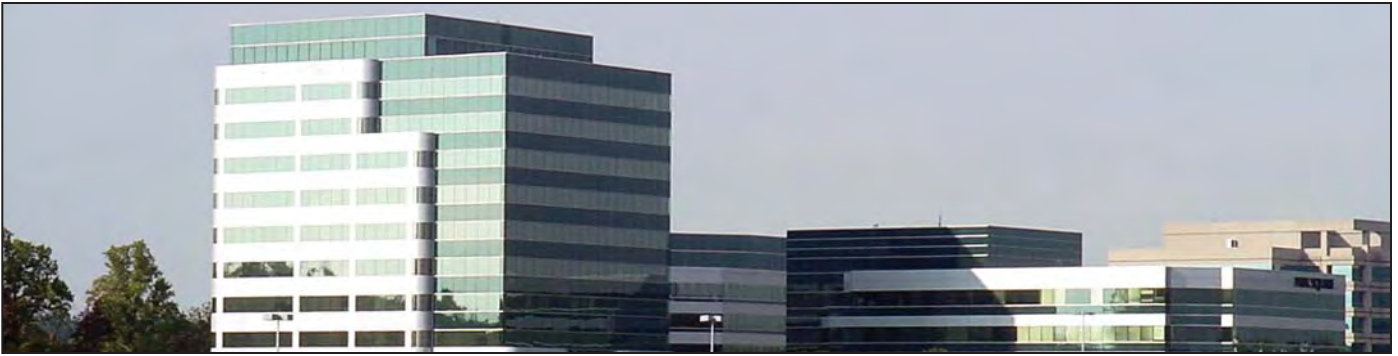
Theme 2: Downtown Columbia will enhance multimodal connectivity through a variety of safe, convenient and innovative transportation alternatives.

2.1 Develop a multimodal transportation system through investment in transit programs and roads that will provide a pedestrian- and bike-friendly, walkable environment.

2.2 Mitigate traffic congestion so that vehicles will be able to move smoothly into and around Downtown without impeding pedestrian flow; encourage outside traffic to bypass Downtown.

2.3 Improve pedestrian connections throughout Downtown and to surrounding villages to encourage strolling, bicycling and human interaction.





As Downtown Columbia grows, new buildings can incorporate green technology and showcase progressive architecture.

2.4 Improve and expand transit service, reinforcing Downtown as the central hub for the local bus system, adding a Downtown shuttle and setting the stage for the possibility of future bus rapid transit and rail mass transit.

2.5 Provide an appropriate level of parking, fostering a park-once approach, substantially reducing or eliminating surface parking lots and integrating well designed structured parking into Downtown.

Sustaining the Environment

Theme 3: Downtown Columbia's natural resources will be protected and enhanced; a network of public spaces will provide places for individual contemplation and social gathering.

3.1 Include green technology to help build a sustainable environment, incorporating measures to reduce energy consumption and pollution while preserving the environment.

3.2 Protect the natural resources and natural beauty of Downtown's lake, streams and woodlands, forming them into a greenway system.

3.3 Identify Symphony Woods and the Merriweather Post Pavilion as Columbia's "Central Park" area, which deserves special design and conservation measures.

3.4 Require additional open space and public space so that Downtown will retain the character of a "city in a park" with plazas, greens, promenades, paths, public art, natural areas and street trees.

Balancing and Phasing Growth

Theme 4: The development of Downtown Columbia will be served by public facilities provided in a timely manner.

4.1 Recognize and implement the General Plan 2000 policy to direct growth into Downtown as the largest of the County's mixed-use centers.

4.2 Establish targets for commercial and housing development for a balance of land uses and public services. This ensures that development does not place undue burdens on existing residents, infrastructure or service providers.

4.3 Monitor and evaluate implementation using a formal reporting process that will provide regular opportunity for public discussion and feedback, and that will allow for refinement as needed.

Involving Everyone

Theme 5: The community will be actively engaged in decisions concerning the evolution of Downtown.

5.1 Enhance communication between citizens and County decision-makers

through opportunities for public information and public participation, so that citizens are knowledgeable about the planning and development of Downtown and have multiple opportunities for input.

5.2 Encourage a partnership in planning and implementation, realizing that many of the recommended strategies will depend on collaboration among the County, private property owners, residents, business owners and community organizations.

Public review processes will continue to engage the community.



1

Making a Special Place



Making a Special Place

Theme 1. *Downtown Columbia will be a diverse, mixed-use, livable, physically distinctive and human-scaled place with a range of housing choices and recreational, civic and cultural amenities.*



Columbia's founder and visionary Jim Rouse is honored by a statue at Downtown's Lakefront.

1.1 Continue and enhance Jim Rouse's vision of Columbia as a thriving, socially responsible and environmentally friendly place for people of all ages, incomes and backgrounds.

As a pioneering planned community of the 1960s, Columbia represents an experiment on how to build a better city. Guiding this process has always been Jim Rouse's vision for a close-knit community that contains both physical and social attributes capable of supporting the growth of people. Today, the implementation of Jim Rouse's vision can be experienced in Columbia:

- Residents feel a connection with nature through the preserved environmental features such as streams and wooded areas. These natural areas help shape and give character to the built environment and create a "city in a park" setting for the community.
- Columbia contains many of the cultural, civic and recreational activities, businesses and institutions found in large urban areas. Yet the daily functions and amenities are reminiscent of the small hometown atmosphere that inspired Jim Rouse.
- As a community of celebrated diversity, people of all ages, incomes and

backgrounds are brought together to live with one another, creating the life experiences that shape an accepting and caring society.

As development continues, new opportunities need to be provided to continue Columbia's purposeful inclusiveness; its physical design structured to promote community; its planned approach to growth; its social responsibility and its stewardship of nature.

1.2 Conserve symbols of Columbia's past found throughout the Downtown area, recognizing that they contribute to the authentic character of Downtown and reinforce its qualities as a special place.

The Lakefront is Downtown's living room, where celebrations such as the 4th of July,



The original Rouse Company building, designed by Frank Gehry, is a Downtown landmark.



Sculptures like the People Tree, The Hug and The Bears are symbols of Columbia.

City Fair, International Day and Festival of the Arts provide memorable experiences that foster community. The former Rouse Company headquarters, the American City Building, the Teachers Building and the original Exhibit Building frame a series of outdoor spaces. These spaces are punctuated by sculptures that symbolize the people and values of Columbia.

Symbols of Columbia's history should be conserved and enhanced. As the city grows, opportunities to introduce additional public art reflecting Columbia's values at the Lakefront should be pursued.

1.3 Shape new development to form well-defined districts within Downtown; orient structures to the street, making them inviting to pedestrians; and establish height limits appropriate to each district's character.

Columbia's villages each contain several neighborhoods. Over the past 40 years, the Downtown has slowly evolved into several recognizable neighborhoods or districts with the Mall as the centerpiece. The Lakefront area is the heart of Downtown, the destination for community gathering and leisure-time activities. Along Governor Warfield Parkway there are several residential communities. The west entrance to the Mall has been redeveloped over the past decade and, with its restaurants and cinema, now serves as a major entertainment magnet in Downtown.



The Warfield Triangle entrance to the Mall suggests an evolution into a more attractive and pedestrian friendly entertainment district.



North of Symphony Woods, along Little Patuxent Parkway, the cluster of tall office buildings, small plazas and attractive landscaping has become a premier office address. Some areas of Downtown, with their suburban-style low-rise office buildings set in large featureless parking lots, have yet to attain a recognizable identity. The crescent-shaped property that surrounds Symphony Woods is the last major undeveloped parcel in Columbia and offers great opportunity to create a distinctive mixed-use neighborhood.

A downtown development master plan should craft an identity for various districts and determine how these districts are shaped and interconnected. Each district should have a consistent design theme in both public and private areas. A particular mix of uses, range of building heights, and public spaces should be used to differentiate districts. Street furniture, lighting fixtures and landscape treatments are other means to create easily recognizable and cohesive districts. Particular attention should be paid to balancing the differentiation of districts and maintaining an integrated design for all Downtown.



Kiosks and outdoor stalls can complement the Downtown retail experience.

Building entrances and interesting façades facing public sidewalks are the primary means of orienting structures to the street. Also, appropriately scaled buildings should line streets to define street edges that frame and enclose outdoor spaces. Short, walkable blocks of mixed uses should be encouraged to stimulate street life through pedestrian activity.

The massing and proportion of buildings is critical and should be guided by height limits that respond to the pedestrian environment, allow for visual variety and balance urban activity with open space. A flexible height limit that allows bonuses for additional low- and/or moderate-income units or other desired features exceeding the required levels could be proposed.

1.4 Design a variety of Downtown commercial activities that complement nearby Oakland Mills and Wilde Lake village centers, recognizing the identity of each.

A downtown development master plan should envision a Downtown that provides retail opportunities for both local stores and national chains. Combinations of department stores, shops and kiosks can create a more vibrant marketplace that will provide a broader spectrum of goods and services. Different districts may be typified by the type of retail goods and services that they offer.

As people's shopping habits change, village centers could strategize to round out the range of retail stores offered in Columbia.

As the first village centers, Wilde Lake and Oakland Mills are early examples of Columbia's model for community commercial design that allows people to socialize while shopping. As consumer preferences shift towards regional shopping destinations, new strategies are needed to balance the development of Downtown and the neighboring village centers. To enhance the movement of people and pedestrian connections, a shuttle system could link Downtown and the village centers to facilitate choice and encourage ties among these locations, as was envisioned in Columbia's early design.

1.5 Provide a full spectrum of housing, ensuring that low-, moderate- and middle-income families have an opportunity to live in Downtown, thus continuing the original vision of Columbia as an inclusive community.

Columbia's far-reaching original goals reflect a commitment to having diverse people live together to create a fully realized community. The types of housing built influence whether people with diverse backgrounds can find a home in the community. A downtown development master plan should reaffirm a commitment to diverse housing.

By providing a full range of housing choices, people from all walks of life will be able to continue to come together, exchange ideas and



With a wide range of housing options, new forms of urban living quarters can be added to Downtown.



learn from one another. Expanded residential options for in-town living could include mid-rise and high-rise apartments or condominiums, lofts, stacked townhouses, accessory apartments and live-work units. New models for developing affordable housing through diverse partnerships and in combination with mixed-use development should generate new and innovative techniques. Establishing co-housing communities, employer-assisted housing and contributions from commercial and office development could become strategies for affordable living in Downtown.

1.6 Support Downtown's function as a major financial and economic center that contributes to its distinctive identity as the Downtown for Columbia and for Howard County.

Downtown is intended to be the financial and economic center of Columbia and Howard County. Enhanced activity in Downtown would increase the draw for office space.

A downtown development master plan should build on the vision of sustaining Downtown as

the location for the region's most successful shopping mall and high quality office market. Recent expansions to the mall have begun to take on the more outward-oriented character of popular lifestyle centers that provide pedestrian-oriented outdoor shopping experiences.

Howard County has a strong office employment base and Downtown offers the potential for growth in high paying office jobs. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) plans for Fort Meade may offer additional opportunity for offices in Downtown.

Downtown office buildings and office workers are important to sustaining the daytime vitality of supporting uses including restaurants, shops and lodging. Businesses typically need meeting space, hotel rooms and conference facilities nearby to hold their activities. Such facilities are currently lacking and would help to support and enhance the attractiveness of Downtown as a premier office location.

1.7 Expand civic and community facilities to augment Columbia's nationally recognized quality of life.

A vibrant Downtown needs civic and community facilities to provide for the quality of life that the public expects. This is especially important because of a growing senior population, aging public facilities and an increasingly diverse population. The County has several mechanisms to ensure that public facilities are well planned and delivered in a timely manner. The County's General Plan sets the broad parameters for the delivery of facilities.

Columbia's Downtown will continue to serve as Howard County's downtown.





Oakland Manor at Town Center is a graceful setting for community events.

ties and services, then the County prepares and updates a series of facility master plans to address individual program needs (for example, the Library Master Plan, the Water and Sewer Master Plan, the Senior Housing Master Plan, etc.) Finally, the County uses its multi-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to program and fund needed public facilities. Each of these plans and processes involve the public in a review and approval process.

Library. The Central Library is one of the most important public facilities in Downtown. The County's library system is ranked as one of the best in the nation for its high quality and patronage. The Central Library could potentially take on a greater role as a center for civic life in Downtown Columbia. It could accommodate more and new civic uses if the building were expanded and/or relocated. The Central Library's location should reflect its importance as a civic facility. Ideally, it would be more centrally located with increased ease of access for pedestrians.

Fire Station. The Banneker Fire Station is one of the busiest fire stations in Howard County. A downtown development master plan should be coordinated with County plans for a relocated or redeveloped fire station. Access to major roadways is the highest priority for the fire station. A relocated fire station could be designed as a showplace of mixed use and affordable housing.

The Lakefront plaza and community centers host fairs and other activities that enrich the community's life.

School. If a potential school were eventually needed in Downtown, it could enhance the civic identity and offer a place for community gatherings. If the County determines that a school would be needed, such a school could be an urban model with multiple stories and limited parking on site, rather than a suburban model with a single story and expansive surface parking lots.

Columbia Association Headquarters. The Columbia Association's headquarters on the Lakefront is also a focal point for community gathering and engagement. Collaboration with the Columbia Association to ensure a permanent headquarters at the current location or at a new, equally prominent site is highly encouraged.

Archives. The Columbia Archives is a museum of Columbia's history. The Archives should continue to serve that function. A strong sense of civic pride in Columbia's history may provide opportunities to expand both the museum and its community education programs.

Community Centers. Existing community centers such as Oakland Manor in Town Center, the Other Barn in Oakland Mills and Slayton House in Wilde Lake currently serve as magnets for civic and community activities. Providing for pedestrian connections between the outlying village centers and Downtown by a shuttle or other means would be one way to enhance community life.





Toby's Dinner Theatre, a pioneer arts venue in Downtown Columbia, continues to entertain the area's residents and the region with award-winning shows.

A new community center could continue the Columbia tradition of providing residents with nearby gathering spots for programs and events. A community center, designed as a signature building and located adjacent to a major public space, could be included in a downtown development master plan. Proposed sources of funding for the construction, maintenance and program operations of a community center should be identified to ensure the facility's long-term success.

1.8 Enhance art and cultural offerings, providing new spaces and opportunities for an active arts community and for public art.

The Artist's Gallery in the American Cities building is an example of an arts space in an office building.

In addition to civic and community facilities, a vibrant Downtown needs arts and cultural facilities and programs. Downtown has many existing resources that are well recognized and highly valued. To nourish these critical resources, arts and cultural offerings should be expanded to create a supportive environment and attract new patrons. New spaces and programs should be provided along with new public art.

Important Resources. Toby's Dinner Theatre is a pioneer arts venue and provides an award-winning dinner theater in the heart of Columbia. The recently completed Horowitz Visual and Performing Arts Center at Howard Community College and the Jim Rouse Theatre at Wilde Lake High School add to the variety of theater experiences offered in Columbia. From the earliest days of Columbia,

the Merriweather Post Pavilion stands out as the outdoor concert venue for the County and the surrounding region. These arts facilities should be protected, perhaps expanded, promoted, nurtured and adequately funded so that they will continue to provide an active cultural life and serve the residents in Downtown and in the County. They are important components that draw people Downtown, helping to make the area lively by day and night.

New Offerings. Columbia residents have long supported local artists. A downtown development master plan should require space for arts and cultural programs, especially on the ground floors of select new buildings. The Artists' Gallery in the American City Building could be a prototype. Strategies should include subsidized/low-cost incubator opportunities for artists and performers.



Public Art. Public art plays a vital role in sharing the life stories of people who shaped the cultural history of the city. The People Tree, The Hug, The Bears and the Willard and Jim Rouse statuary group are all iconic sculptures that tell the story of Columbia. The importance of embedding meaning into the physical landscape also helps people form bonds with the places built for them. Learning from the examples of public art at the Lakefront, a downtown development master plan should include public art to continue building a memorable place filled with the life and character of Columbia.



The development of Addison Circle in Dallas, Texas, was guided by an architectural review panel.

Additionally, the walls of buildings and parking garages could become the surfaces for murals and sculptural relief that tell the story of Columbia and its people. Common elements such as water fountains, bus shelters and signage could be transformed into objects of cultural meaning.

Artistic expressions should be incorporated into both newly formed and existing public spaces throughout Downtown. Within these centers of civic life, art can play an important role in communicating what Columbians value. Sources of inspiration might include nature, social diversity, or even significant events that have contributed to Columbia's cultural meaning. Outdoor plazas, greens and promenades as well as institutions such as the library, archives and a community center could showcase and provide appropriate homes for artisan forms of community knowledge.

An equally important goal is to include art in private development. The architectural form of buildings could feature sculptural reliefs and integrate the design of both freestanding and attached installations. In addition to other locations, mixed-use storefronts wrapping parking garages could become studio and live-work space for local artist adding to the vitality of Downtown's art scene.

To support public art, a percentage of funding for art could be set aside based on total con-

struction costs for private and public projects in Downtown. Multidisciplinary project teams including artists and landscape architects, together with the community, should design unique pieces that will become the hallmarks of Downtown.

1.9 Improve the design of Downtown buildings through design guidelines and a design review panel to ensure that buildings, streets and public spaces will be aesthetically pleasing.

Downtown building design review is currently undertaken by Howard Research and Design (HRD), a wholly owned subsidiary of GGP, in its role as the developer of Columbia.

A new approach is needed for design review in Downtown. Design guidelines are needed as a measure against which to evaluate any site-specific development proposal. The various groups that review plans could use these guidelines: community groups, County technical staff and the Planning Board. The County has also proposed the establishment of a Design Advisory Panel (DAP), comprised of design professionals, that could have authority to review plans for Downtown development. Together, the design guidelines and the DAP would set high standards for Downtown development.



The Family sculpture, located in Wilde Lake village green, is an early example of public art in Columbia.

Public space is the ideal setting for people to interact with each other and provides places for public art.



A downtown development master plan should include specific design guidelines for Downtown and for each of its districts. Also, criteria for Planning Board review of plans should be included. Ultimately, any proposed guidelines and plan review criteria need approval from the County Council.

At a minimum, proposed design guidelines should address the following:

- **Purpose / Mix of Uses** – Land use mix and design character for each district in Downtown
- **Urban Design** - character or general layout of sites and their relation to streets
- **Street Design** - detailed description of street function / street furniture / streetscapes
- **Open Space** - general descriptions / layout / anticipated functions / appropriate amenities / public art
- **Building Design** - general description of the heights, bulk, character, materials, green building approval
- **Signature Buildings** - location / description of how such buildings are to be different
- **Landscaping** – complementary with architecture and site design / screening / compatible species

Design guidelines apply not only to buildings but also to the public realm.



Moving and Connecting People



Moving and Connecting People

Theme 2: *Downtown Columbia will enhance multimodal connectivity through a variety of safe, convenient and innovative transportation alternatives.*



2.1 **Develop a multimodal transportation system** through investment in transit programs and roads that will provide a pedestrian- and bike-friendly, walkable environment.



Transportation capacity and safety are critical to the success of Downtown Columbia. Capacity should be in balance with amenities and development.



Multimodal travel is the goal for Downtown Columbia.

Strategies to address overall transportation capacity in Downtown should address the following:

1. Intersection improvements should be made on major roads.
2. The internal network of local streets should be expanded.
3. More lanes should be added in and out of Downtown. This includes improvements to the MD 175 and Broken Land Parkway interchanges of US 29, and either a new interchange at South Entrance road or an overpass across US 29.
4. Different ways of traveling to and within Downtown need to be encouraged in order to improve the travel experience. Using public transportation, walking, biking and park-and-ride alternatives are all good options. Tools such as transpor-

Public transit should play a major role in future transportation improvements.

tation demand management and parking management can also help. Alternatives and tools are discussed in section 2.4 in this chapter and in Appendix B.

Major Intersections. The traffic capacity on major Downtown roadways (Little Patuxent Parkway, Broken Land Parkway, Governor Warfield, South Entrance Road and Hickory Ridge Road) is of concern. They provide local access to Downtown uses and serve through traffic that is traveling to and from US 29.

Improvements to major intersections should be addressed in ways that improve the pedestrian environment while minimizing impacts on traffic between nearby villages and US 29. A collaborative effort of the County and property owners is needed for funding major road and transit improvements. For major roads



Both plazas and broader sidewalks will help encourage pedestrian activity along streets lined with shops and restaurants.

and intersections, County funding will primarily come from the Adequate Public Facilities road excise tax, which is levied on development when building permits are approved. Private funding sources should also be identified in a downtown development master plan. Phasing of development needs to be tied to transportation improvements.

Internal Street Network. Currently, Downtown streets have been designed to move vehicles as efficiently as possible between destinations. As a result, the mobility of pedestrians has been limited. The street network needs to be redesigned to create a more pedestrian-oriented environment that encourages people to walk rather than drive in Downtown.

A downtown development master plan should include new connections to expand the number of choices people have for traveling within Downtown. Streets should be designed for both pedestrians and drivers, with the most important streets, lined with shops and restaurants, having more amenities including bike lanes, street trees and furniture. New streets, some carved from existing parking lots, will serve a critical role in forming a network of connections. This network will help disperse vehicles along a greater number of routes, thereby reducing congestion.

An improved network will reduce the need to travel on the major Downtown streets that serve through traffic. The grid-like internal network of local streets is also necessary to

The design of this street creates an environment that is oriented towards pedestrians, not cars.



provide sufficient capacity for traffic generated by new office, retail, residential, lodging, cultural and civic uses in Downtown.

A proposed plan should include street design guidelines for an expanded street network and a walkable, lively pedestrian environment. Provisions should be made to accommodate all travelers including people on foot, on bicycle, in wheelchairs and driving automobiles, delivery trucks, ambulances and fire rescue vehicles. Safe and convenient access to the street system for all users is paramount.

Interchange Improvements. Howard County and the State Highway Administration (SHA) are jointly funding the widening of northbound US 29 by one lane from MD 32 north to MD 175. This project is independent of any proposal for development or redevelopment in the Downtown. Potential improvements to the three interchanges that connect Downtown to the US 29 regional highway system should be coordinated by the County, the State and the developers as part of a downtown development master plan. These are:

- MD 175 / US 29 interchange, which provides full movements at the northern entrance to Downtown
- South Entrance Road / US 29 interchange, which provides Downtown access inbound and outbound from the southbound lanes of US 29, and
- Broken Land Parkway / US 29, which provides full movements at the southern entrance to Downtown.



Interchanges will need to be re-configured to meet future traffic demand. The urban diamond interchange (shown below) offers the potential for a more efficient traffic flow and consumes less land.

All intersections should be designed to safely accommodate vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

A downtown development master plan should phase the Downtown development program and related roadway improvements with regional system upgrades. The capacity of and plans for improvements to the Downtown interchanges will affect the development capacity of Downtown.

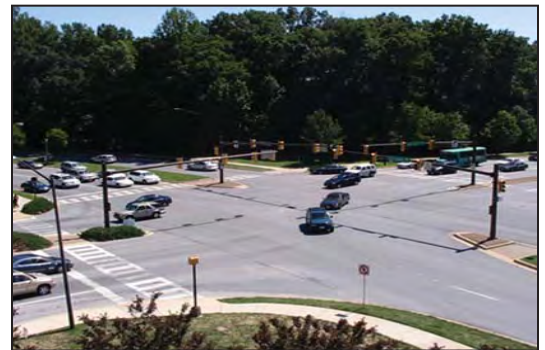
Modal Shifts. A downtown development master plan should include strategies for shifting to a multimodal system. Several strategies for making a multimodal shift could be addressed:

- Construct and expand pedestrian connections
- Develop a transportation center within the Downtown area
- Establish a Downtown shuttle service
- Expand existing satellite park and ride lots
- Designate priority transit corridors and regional connections
- Develop shared parking facilities with priority parking
- Create a multimodal planning team to spearhead efforts in and around Downtown

To complement transportation choices, property owners could jointly establish a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program. A TDM is a set of specific strategies that fosters increased efficiency of the transportation system by influencing travel behavior by mode, time, frequency, trip length, cost and/or route. TDM tools include carpooling, transit, telecommuting, flextime, compressed workweeks, value pricing, bicycle strategies, pedestrian strategies, high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, commuter choice, parking management and Advanced Travel Information System (ATIS). A Downtown partnership among major property owners could be the vehicle to support a Downtown TDM program.

2.2 Mitigate traffic congestion so that vehicles will be able to move smoothly into and around Downtown without impeding pedestrian flow; encourage outside traffic to bypass Downtown.

Adequate public facilities (APF) regulations exempt some Downtown intersections from level-of-service (LOS) standards. A proposed plan would set forth new LOS standards for pedestrian and automotive travel. Such standards would ensure that sidewalks, streets, medians and intersections are safe, efficient and commodious for drivers, cyclists and people on foot and in wheelchairs. New standards for Downtown streets should be proposed and provide short-term and long-term approaches.



2.3 Improve pedestrian connections throughout Downtown and to surrounding villages to encourage strolling, bicycling and human interaction.

A proposal for Downtown should both strengthen existing and create new physical linkages within Downtown and to surrounding villages. These linkages will become the building blocks of an expanding pedestrian-oriented public realm. Columbia has always been noted for its extensive system of off-road paths through the open space network. The existing pathway network should be expanded for pedestrians and cyclists to provide connections among important destinations and as an integral part of open spaces.

A more walkable Downtown calls for an expanded network of sidewalks and crosswalks at all intersections. Throughout the Downtown, streets should have sidewalks along both sides. In areas where retail uses are concentrated and heavy pedestrian use is expected, wide sidewalks should be provided with shade trees and street furniture to enhance the pedestrian experience.

Promenades, such as the one along Lake Kittamaquidi, are another important component of a Downtown pedestrian system. A promenade is an extended walkway, more prominent and frequently wider than a sidewalk, which accommodates significant pedestrian movements and provides a formal connection between important destinations. A promenade may be used as a setting for planned events such as festivals.



Promenades are ideal ways to reach festival settings.

To improve overall accessibility in Downtown, major promenade-type walkways should be provided from the Mall to Symphony Woods, from the Mall to Lake Kittamaquidi, and from the Mall toward Wilde Lake village center. These promenades should establish strong pedestrian and visual connections. Each should be developed with distinctive characteristics to create memorable and diverse walkable environments.

As part of planning for the 20th anniversary of Columbia in 1987, a vision for creating new amenities along the Lakefront included an expanded pedestrian promenade wrapping around the lake edge and connecting to Nomanisan Island. Recent additions to the promenade have gradually increased the accessibility of the waterfront. A downtown development master plan could propose completing the lakeside pathway loop. As part of this project, efforts could be made to enhance the variety of activities the Lakefront offers. For example, the Kennedy Gardens could extend along the walkway to provide a lush and attractive arboretum setting. Sitting and gathering areas could offer opportunities to rest and enjoy the natural beauty of the Lakefront. Some areas could feature structures nestled alongside the banks for other forms of leisurely activity such as fishing. Larger segments of the promenade could host performance areas and spaces for vendors.

Early models and sketches of Downtown created in the 1960s portray a prominent connection from Oakland Mills for east-west travel in Columbia. The US 29 pedestrian/bike overpass built in 1983 serves as an important feature of the County's spinal pathway system for walking and biking. A proposed plan should recognize and address the importance of this connection and should enhance the overpass as a grand promenade across US 29. An attractive new, renovated or remodeled bridge is needed and could be designed as an iconic symbol of Columbia. With added lighting, the existing pathways connecting to the bridge would provide a safe and inviting place for evening users.

2.4 **Improve and expand transit service,** reinforcing Downtown as the central hub for the local bus system, adding a Downtown shuttle and setting the stage for the possibility of future bus rapid transit and rail mass transit.



The pedestrian bridge over US 29 has the potential to be an attractive and inviting connection, such as this example from the city of Greenville, SC.

The vision for Downtown Columbia is a place where people are more important than their private vehicles and where easy connections are provided to village centers, community facilities and neighboring developments. Improved public transit will reduce dependency on private car use and ownership and will help to facilitate a more pedestrian-friendly and walkable environment. All members of society from young children to senior citizens benefit from improved public transportation options. A downtown development master plan should address the phased implementation of several modes of transit service including Howard Transit; regional commuter bus transit; a shuttle, trolley or other such local service and an expanded Downtown transit hub. If the proposed development warrants it, rail mass transit should also be addressed.

Howard Transit. Potential Howard Transit stops throughout the new Downtown districts need to be identified in a downtown development master plan. Research by Howard Transit's contract manager, Corridor Transportation Corporation (CTC), will identify optimal routes, schedules and service frequencies for added bus service. DPZ and CTC will also study transit approaches in similar environments. Property owners should work with the County pursuant to the Transit Development Plan (TDP). The TDP is updated every 5 years, thus providing an opportunity for periodic review of Downtown transit service. DPZ will also complete short-term and mid-term transit feasibility studies as part of the 2008 Transit Development Plan.

The Howard Transit network that serves Columbia is regularly assessed to improve service.

Increase Regional Bus Transit (RBT); The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) provides several commuter bus routes along US 29 between Baltimore and Washington that also serve Columbia. As Downtown develops, the hours of service may need to expand.

Establish Bus Rapid Transit (BRT); BRT encompasses a variety of techniques for enhancing traditional bus service via higher-quality vehicles, dedicated transit rights of way, traffic signal preemption, Smart Card fare collection and other strategies. Additionally, a Downtown transit hub would encourage greater use of a potential BRT service.

Downtown Shuttle. To complement Howard Transit, an independently funded Downtown shuttle system is needed as development increases. The shuttles could carry passengers around the Downtown core and to outlying parking garages, neighboring village centers and nearby major institutions. The shuttle system could include distinctively designed vehicles and artistically designed stops that would enhance Downtown as an attractive destination.

Downtown Transit Hub. Downtown Columbia will continue to serve as the Howard Transit transportation hub. A transportation center in Downtown as part of the long-range plan for transit-oriented development would assist in achieving higher transit use. Such a center would need to be centrally located for all districts, with direct access to major arteri-





A shuttle service, using distinctive vehicles and artistic stops, could help reduce vehicular congestion.

The MARC train system provides options for travel to Baltimore and Washington.

als, but within convenient walking distance of major retail and activity centers. It should have sufficient space for commuter parking, provide opportunity for shared usage and could include some retail or office space.

Rail Transit. Located within the growth corridor of the Baltimore-Washington metro area, Columbia is an important population and employment center. Downtown's significance, combined with other existing and proposed economic activity hubs (BWI Airport and NSA / Fort Meade), creates an opportunity to evaluate transit access within a regional context. If connections to Baltimore, Washington and various other corridor activity centers could be achieved, they would expand the range of travel choices necessary for connecting people with employment, mitigating dependency on automobile travel and restoring environmental health.

The Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC), Washington Council of Governments (Wash-COG), Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) should all be partners in decisions about connections between Downtown Columbia and the Washington and Baltimore area transit systems. The success in bringing rail mass transit to Columbia largely depends on the level of development in Downtown.

A recent feasibility study of the Washington Metro Area Transit Authority's green line



The long-range plan for Columbia should include a multi-use transportation center.

extension from Greenbelt to Baltimore-Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport has generated several concepts for service to Columbia. A suggested alignment could link the Savage MARC station to Downtown via MD 32 and Broken Land Parkway.

Another possibility could provide a link from Downtown across US 29 to Oakland Mills village center and Blandair Park, then along MD 100 to Arundel Mills and finally to the airport. Other options create a spur line from the Savage MARC station to Columbia Gateway, then Snowden River Parkway shopping areas, past Oakland Mills, then crossing US 29 into Downtown and terminating near the college and hospital.



2.5 Provide an appropriate level of parking, fostering a park-once approach, substantially reducing or eliminating surface parking lots and integrating well designed structured parking into Downtown.

Most development of Downtown over the past 40 years has relied on large, surface parking lots provided at each destination. As development continues, a park-once environment that guides vehicles coming into Downtown toward peripheral garages could become an effective element to minimize traffic congestion in and around Downtown. The park-once concept is facilitated by creating a shuttle system that circulates among peripheral parking areas along a main route with access to major destinations within Downtown.



Attractive parking structures, especially with shops on the ground floor, should be integrated into Downtown.

Establishing a shuttle system would also showcase the strength of Downtown's location as a premier office district with convenient options for travel among hotels, conference space, shopping and entertainment amenities.

As part of the regeneration of Wilde Lake and Oakland Mills village centers, shuttle service could be extended to pick up and drop off passengers on the plaza in front of Slayton House and between the Barns. This would provide not only new shopping opportunities that support local merchants but would also serve as other peripheral parking locations.

Ideally, parking structures should be designed so they are not visible from the street. Where possible, they should be located internal to the block. Buildings with structured parking as their sole use are discouraged. Vehicular access to and from the structures should preferably be from secondary streets, while pedestrian access should be from primary streets where first-floor, street-front retail should also be located.

As Downtown grows, parking lots will be replaced by attractive parking garages and pedestrians will have pleasant walks along streets or take shuttles.



Sustaining the Environment



Sustaining the Environment

Theme 3. *Downtown Columbia's natural resources will be protected and enhanced; a network of public spaces will provide places for individual contemplation and social gathering.*



Green buildings and infrastructure systems contribute to a more sustainable Downtown.

3.1 **Include green technology** to help build a sustainable environment, incorporating measures to reduce energy consumption and pollution while preserving the environment.

During summer 2007 the County Executive proposed and the County Council approved Green Building standards for Howard County based on the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system.

Green building standards, which play an integral part in energy strategies for a more sustainable community, should become the hallmark of Downtown Columbia. Given that many of the future buildings in Downtown, by virtue of their size or type, will be required to meet green building standards, Downtown Columbia has the potential to establish an identity as one of the leading green communities in the region.

Green building technology could also inspire forward-looking architectural design for Downtown. The façades and roofs of structures might even become green canvases contributing to the outward expression of the "city in a park." These green buildings could become the centerpieces of an expanded

environmental strategy for Downtown. This environmental strategy could also emphasize the role that healthy buildings play in the well-being of those who live and work Downtown; promote programs to reduce, reuse and recycle materials; and undertake other activities that might ultimately help to combat global warming.

Property owners are strongly encouraged to exceed the LEED certification level required for projects after July 1, 2008. Buildings that achieve silver, gold or platinum LEED ratings can take advantage of the County's tax incentives for high performance buildings.

Another area where green technology should be used is water conservation. Efforts should include shared resource systems between buildings and outdoor public spaces. Methods for harvesting and reusing rainwater should

The Lakefront will remain the heart and symbol of a green and sustainable Downtown.



Lake Kittamaqundi and Little Patuxent River form the spine of the Downtown greenway.

be developed to support gardens and street trees. Natural drainage systems designed with the land can channel stormwater runoff while filtering ground pollutants and reducing impervious surface. Even recycled wastewater could have a place in managing Downtown's water resources.

3.2 Protect the natural resources and natural beauty of Downtown's lake, streams and woodlands, forming them into a greenway system.

The physical planning of Columbia is organized around its natural environmental features. Development is clustered so that stream valleys, lakes and wooded areas create a green system of preserved open space that respects the land and provides for people's need to interact with nature. Further development of Downtown should preserve and enhance the natural patterns that define Columbia's open space network. Downtown should be an environmentally friendly and sustainable place, befitting of Jim Rouse's vision of Columbia as a "city in a park."

A downtown development master plan should recognize that Downtown is part of the Little Patuxent River watershed. Most of Downtown stormwater drains into Lake Kittamaqundi and the Little Patuxent River. A downtown development master plan should include a commitment to the preservation of sensitive lands and the development of a stormwater management system that effectively manages runoff and water quality in Downtown.

Symphony Woods is a treasured green space, but it needs both woodland restoration and additional activities to meet its full potential as the "Central Park" for Downtown.



Currently, most of Downtown's environmental resources are protected as permanent, credited open space. Environmentally sensitive areas within the Crescent property should be added to the open space network as part of any future development on that parcel.

Beyond the preservation of environmental lands, a downtown development master plan should also include provisions to address stormwater management. Because parts of Downtown were developed prior to stormwater management requirements, updating systems will present a challenge. Implementing a green infrastructure system and low impact development practices which minimize disturbances to the land and provides natural means for filtering, controlling and containing stormwater is encouraged.

3.3 Identify Symphony Woods and the Merriweather Post Pavilion as Columbia's "Central Park" area, which deserves special design and conservation measures.



The Lakefront has Downtown's largest concentration of open space and amenities.



Downtown needs a variety of open spaces (public and private, formal and informal) as part of Columbia's identity as "a city in a park."

Originally the summer home of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, MPP is in the center of Downtown Columbia's "Central Park."

Currently, Symphony Woods is a jewel in the rough. Symphony Woods needs to be preserved as the "Central Park" within Downtown. To increase its visibility and promote the use of this natural area, a connection such as a promenade should link Symphony Woods to the Mall. Other connections could link to Merriweather Post Pavilion to any potential new development at the Crescent. Protection of tree roots and a sustainability plan for the healthy maintenance of the woods, including the introduction of understory plantings, is greatly needed. In addition to preserving the natural features, the park could also be enhanced by the addition of public art.

Set in the natural beauty of Symphony Woods but not part of the woods property is Merriweather Post Pavilion (MPP). MPP has always been a social gathering place and premier entertainment venue. MPP would benefit from conversion to an indoor/outdoor venue so that performances can be enjoyed year-round. With expanded programming, MPP's function as a gathering place would be enhanced. A downtown development master plan should address funding for an improved facility and propose a reasonable strategy to achieve year-round performances at MPP.

3.4 Require additional open space and public space so that Downtown will retain the character of a "city in a park" with plazas, greens, promenades, paths, public art, natural areas and street trees.

Over the last 40 years, Downtown has gained praise for its open spaces: first for Symphony Woods and Lake Kittamaquundi with its surrounding green spaces and more recently for the small plazas associated with the Mall and Downtown office buildings. The public realm of Downtown should continue to evolve and expand.

In keeping with Columbia's approach to open space design, opportunities for private contemplation and social gatherings should continue to flourish within Downtown. To expand the range of these experiences, additional amenity areas such as greens, plazas and promenades should be designated in a downtown development master plan so that





Farmer's markets and community gardens can play a role in making for a healthier and more sustainable community.

the network of public space is expanded. These areas should be designed to orchestrate a sequence of transitions between built and natural environments that maintain and diversify the natural beauty of Downtown.

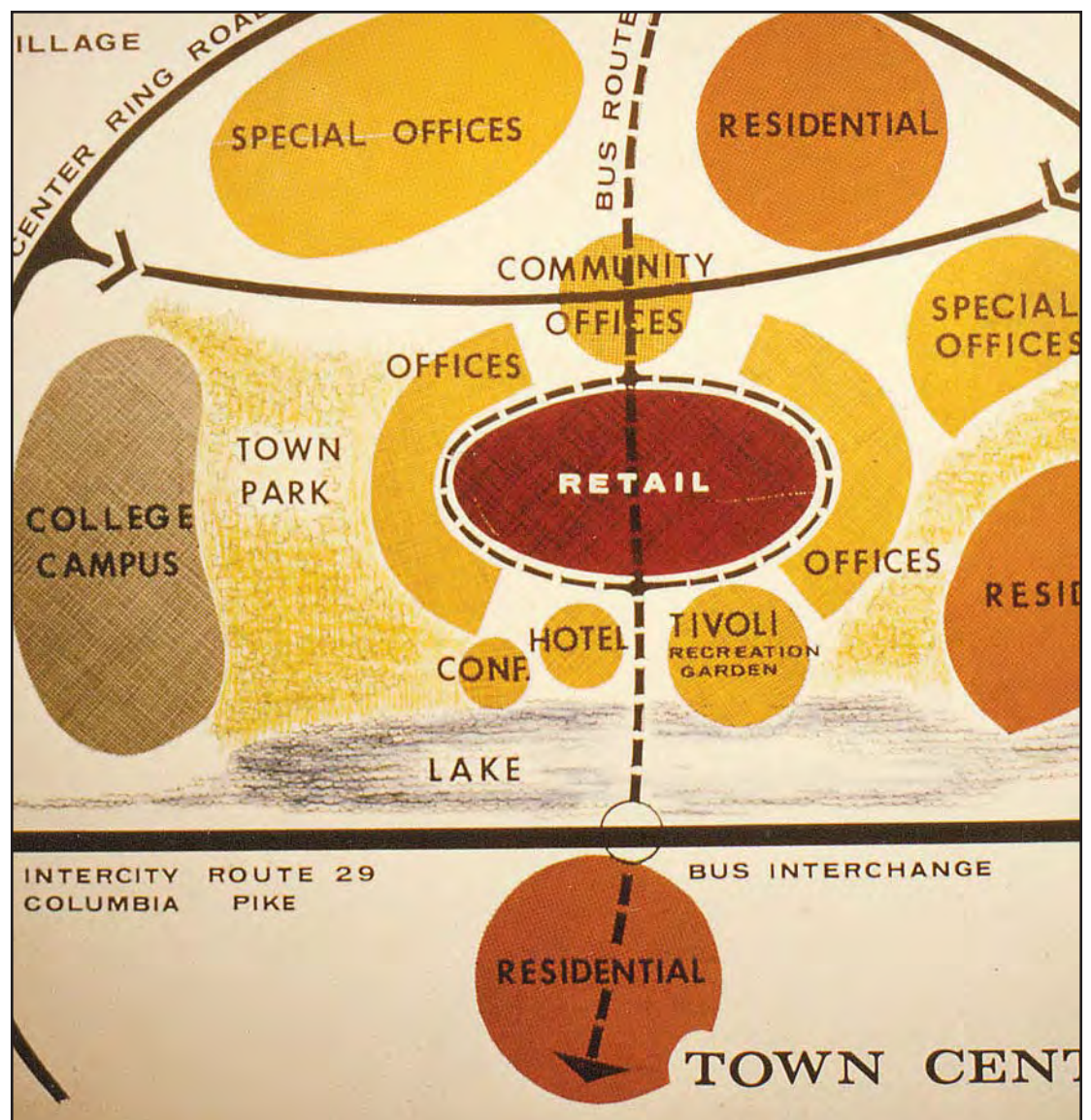
A downtown development master plan should dedicate additional land to the public realm in Downtown. It should establish minimum requirements in two separate categories of open space. The first category is traditional New Town open space that sets aside environmentally sensitive lands including steep slopes, wetlands and floodplains. The second category is amenity areas. This land creates true public squares to permit assembly and the exercise of free speech in Downtown. A major amenity area is strongly encouraged for each proposed district. The major amenity area may be either a town green (landscape) or plaza (hardscape) and should be designed, improved and dedicated to Howard County to be held in trust for the public. Smaller amenity areas may be included throughout the Downtown.

New public spaces will create new challenges and opportunities to build upon Columbia's legacy as a "city in a park." Innovations should integrate elements of Columbia's environmental founding principles with current sustainable practices, such as forest and habitat enhancements, stream restoration, community gardens and farmers' markets.

Oakland Mills farmer's market has become a Columbia destination for healthy, organic produce.



Balancing and Phasing Growth



Balancing and Phasing Growth

Theme 4. *The development of Downtown Columbia will be served by public facilities provided in a timely manner.*

4.1 Recognize and implement the General Plan 2000 policy to direct growth into Downtown as the largest of the County's mixed-use centers.

General Plan 2000 addresses Downtown under Policy 5.5: *Encourage Downtown Columbia's continuing evolution and growth as the County's urban center.* This policy includes recommendations to implement the policy.

Adding residential units is recommended "to maintain activity and support restaurants, shops and entertainment uses after normal office hours." Other recommendations relate to redeveloping older properties and encouraging "vertical mixed uses." Improved pedestrian

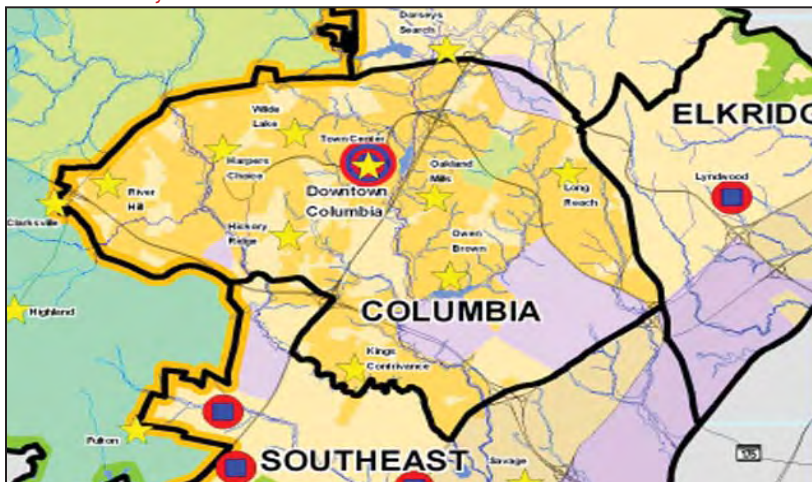
connections and transit integration are sought to foster connectivity by multimodal means. Recommendations regarding open space, a cultural center, infrastructure and Symphony Woods look to increase amenities and provide higher levels of maintenance in Downtown. These recommended actions are further described on pages 177 through 178 in *General Plan 2000*.

4.2 Establish targets for commercial and housing development for a balance of land uses and public services. This ensures that development does not place undue burdens on existing residents, infrastructure or service providers.

Public input and comments during the Downtown Columbia planning process showed concern that public amenities and traffic capacity be addressed prior to beginning construction of a project. The public also expressed concern that an appropriate balance of uses (office, retail, residential) be provided so one single use does not dominate the redevelopment of Downtown in its early phases. The public's greatest concern was to have a planned approach for all development.

A phasing plan is essential to provide infrastructure in a timely manner and to ensure a balanced mix of uses. Phasing addresses

The *General Plan 2000* recognized an evolving mixed-use character of what is a downtown for both Columbia and Howard County.





Phasing plans define an appropriate balance of uses and help ensure that infrastructure and amenities keep pace with development.

development timing by defining the amount of construction expected within certain periods. It addresses the mix of development in each phase, requiring that specific amounts of each major use (office, commercial, residential, civic/cultural, open space and public space) be completed before the next phase begins. Phasing also requires that certain benchmarks be reached for infrastructure improvements (amenities and transportation capacity) before the next phase begins.

Because of the complexity, scale and duration of redevelopment in Downtown, this framework calls for a downtown development master plan to provide a phasing plan that includes the following related planning requirements:

- **Phasing:** Timetable with a maximum number of residential units in specific increments, major infrastructure to be completed and amounts of office, retail and civic/cultural facilities per phase
- **Pedestrian Connections:** Specific projects and their completion dates for each major phase above
- **Roadway Improvements:** Specific projects and their completion dates for each major phase above
- **Transit Solutions:** Proposed transit solutions and timeline for their implementation for each major phase above
- **Public Spaces:** Amenity area design solutions including one major public space for each district proposed in Downtown to be fully constructed and then dedicated to Howard County for use by the public
- **Other Amenities:** Arts, civic and cultural facilities, locations and timing
- **Open Space:** Environmentally sensitive areas to be dedicated as open space
- **Future Public Facilities:** potential sites for new fire station, library, a transit hub and potentially an urban school should be considered

The General Plan Monitoring Report provides for public review and input on the progress of General Plan 2000 goals and objectives.

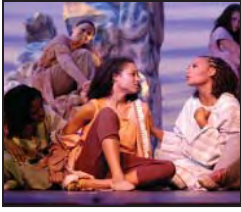
4.3 Monitor and evaluate implementation using a formal reporting process that will provide regular opportunity for public discussion and feedback, and that will allow for refinement as needed.

Development activity in Howard County is currently monitored by means of the annual Development Monitoring System (DMS) report and the periodic General Plan Monitoring Report (GPMR).

The County's principal development tracking mechanism is the annual DMS Report. Approved and in-process residential and nonresidential plans are analyzed by location, type and amount. Resulting population and employment impacts are also discussed. In addition, there are sections on housing sales prices, land preservation statistics and the status of APF housing unit allocations. Information on senior housing and moderate-income housing are also tracked. Using the DMS, the County will be able to monitor Downtown development to ensure key benchmarks are being met before allowing the next phase of development to begin.

A General Plan Monitoring Report (GPMR) is issued every two to three years. A committee of County residents, business- and property-owners, and representatives of various civic organizations gather to review progress towards the goals set forth in *General Plan 2000*. As an amendment to the General Plan, a downtown development master plan should





As the County's and Columbia's population increases, as it ages and becomes more diverse, the demand for public services, facilities and arts programs can be expected to increase.

identify benchmarks that would be added to the GPMR. As part of this report, those benchmarks would be discussed by the committee, published, then reviewed by the Planning Board at a public meeting.

Together, the annual DMS Report and the periodic GPMR would provide a formal reporting process to provide regular opportunity for public discussion and feedback.

In addition to these County-generated reports, the property owner should propose a process to deliver a Downtown Columbia Monitoring Report. This report could track the progress made toward meeting the phasing requirements adopted as part of a downtown development master plan. The report process should include an opportunity for review by a monitoring committee and by the public.



5

Involving Everyone



Involving Everyone

Theme 5. *The community will be actively engaged in decisions concerning the evolution of Downtown.*



People will have opportunities to confer with decision-makers about the issues that affect their communities.

5.1 Enhance communication between citizens and County decision-makers through opportunities for public information and public participation, so that citizens are knowledgeable about the planning and development of Downtown and have multiple opportunities for input.

The general public will continue to participate in the planning process for Downtown Columbia. This framework will be presented to and have input accepted from the public at multiple venues around Columbia. A schedule of meeting dates and locations is available on the County's web page. Then, any proposal brought forward as a downtown development master plan would be subject to multiple public meetings before the Planning Board and the County Council. This is the purpose for the legislative process being recommended by this framework. At any time in these processes, citizens are able to submit both formal and informal comments to staff, appointed and elected officials via email, telephone, letter and the County's web site.

During October, a series of public meetings and workshops will be held to review and discuss both this framework and the traffic study. At the end of a public comment period the framework will be revised, published and

distributed so that the community and property owners may refer to it as a guide for the downtown development master plan and any future zoning regulation amendments.

With this framework as a foundation, GGP can then request approval of a General Plan amendment and a zoning regulation amendment (ZRA) by the County Council. This process is summarized in Appendix A. These two amendments require public meetings and the opportunity for public comments and input before the Planning Board and the County Council.

Subsequent to the adoption of a downtown development master plan and zoning regulation amendments, the process should follow the traditional requirements of the New Town zoning district. Additional requirements for





A plan for Downtown should include citizen participation and have multiple public dialogs.

professional peer review by a Design Advisory Panel (DAP) have been described earlier in this framework. The entire process should include the following:

- Public Meeting(s) before the Planning Board for Comprehensive Sketch Plan (CSP) review
- Public Meeting(s) before the Planning Board for Final Development Plan (FDP) review
- Community pre-submission meeting by developer with the Town Center village board
- Design Advisory Panel review prior to Site Development Plan (SDP) submission
- Public Meetings(s) before the Planning Board for Site Development Plan (SDP) review
- Downtown Columbia Monitoring Report with monitoring committee review meetings
- Downtown Columbia Monitoring Report public meeting(s) before the Planning Board

5.2 Encourage a partnership in planning and implementation, realizing that many of the recommended strategies will depend on collaboration among the County, private property owners, residents, business owners and community organizations.

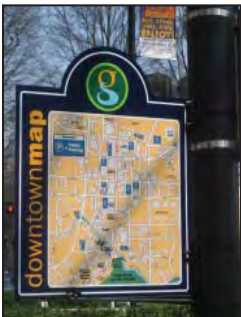
This framework strongly encourages Downtown property owners to work collaboratively to define a plan for their properties and the

property that they hold in trust for the public. The primary property owner and original petitioner, HRD (now GGP), as it develops a downtown development master plan for its holdings, is encouraged to consider the entire Downtown and is encouraged to confer with other property owners.

Unique experiences and destinations in Downtown require that service providers, property- and business-owners and the County collaborate to develop a new management model. Currently, the management of activities and improvements are the separate responsibilities of the County, Columbia Association and various private property owners.

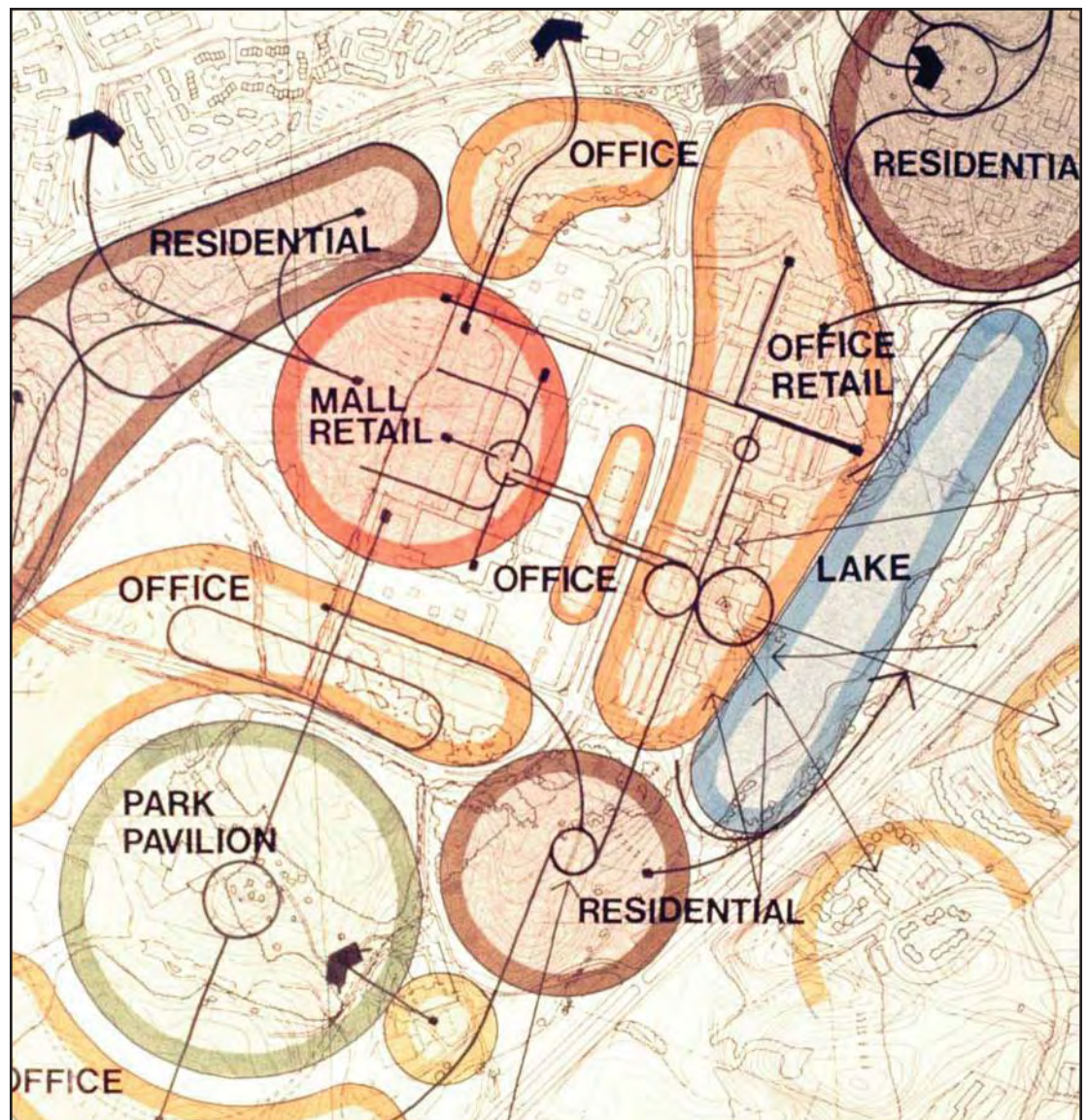
To provide the high-quality amenities envisioned for Downtown, a Downtown partnership among the various entities responsible to plan, manage and program the Downtown is critical. This coordinated effort could create a more efficient approach to safety, security, maintenance, marketing, physical improvements and transportation. Such collaboration should result in a more coordinated public realm with new directional signage, upgraded sidewalks, integrated street furniture, pedestrian lighting and lush landscaping that will generate an aesthetic quality that is operationally functional, attractive and vibrant.

A Downtown partnership can help provide new signage and public street furniture. It can program activities and provide for ambassador services.



A

Master Plan & Zoning Approach



Master Plan & Zoning Approach

OVERVIEW

The approval process recommended for Downtown Columbia is comprised of two components:

- **An amendment to General Plan 2000 (GP), requested by the principal property owner (original petitioner), which proposes to formally adopt a downtown development master plan for Downtown Columbia, and**
- **A Zoning Regulation Amendment (ZRA), requested by the principal property owner (original petitioner), which defines the development program, amenity requirements, Planning Board review criteria, and all of the related entitlements and requirements.**

To achieve the community's vision for Downtown Columbia, the County Council will need to review and eventually approve a downtown development master plan and zoning amendments to implement that plan. The County Administration is proposing that the original petitioner request an approval of a General Plan Amendment by the County Council.

Consistent with an amendment to General Plan 2000, the original petitioner would be expected to petition for zoning regulation amendments that would implement the downtown development master plan. Zoning regulation amendments would also address permitted number of residential units, building heights, low-, moderate- and middle-income housing requirements, infrastructure timing and ways to provide for civic, community and public spaces as well as public art.

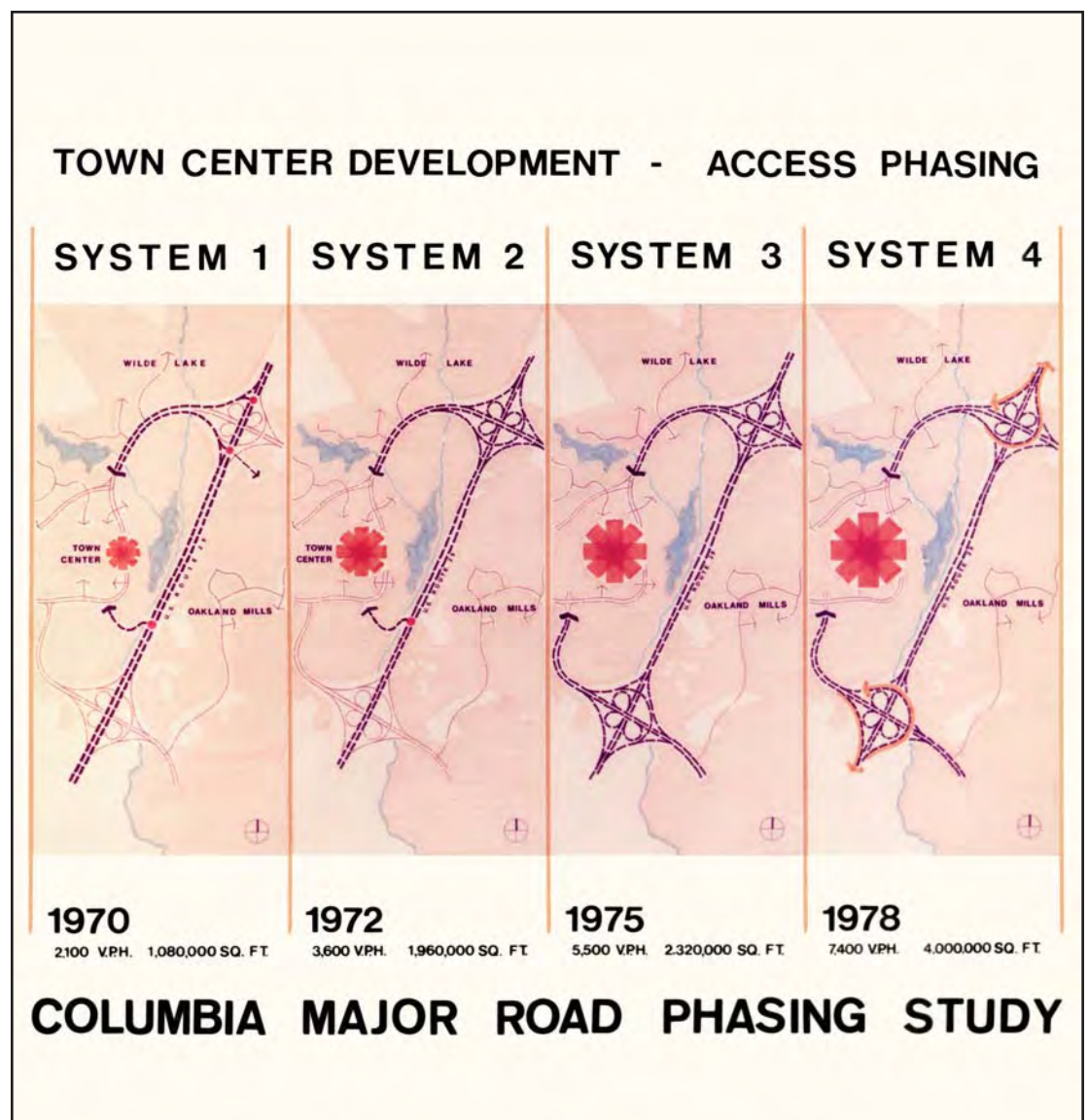
Ideally, these two amendments, GP and ZRA, would be introduced to the public at the same time, so that the relationship between the

downtown development master plan and its implementation through the zoning regulations is clearly understood.

The County Administration is proposing to utilize these two amendment processes, GP and ZRA, as the recommended approach for Downtown, because they are legislative processes. Legislative processes afford the public the maximum opportunity to interact with their elected officials. The other processes that could be utilized such as amendment to the Preliminary Development Plan or a rezoning case would be a quasi-judicial process, requiring that elected officials cannot speak with the public or anyone else about the case. With this legislative approach, elected officials are free to meet with the public and to discuss the amendments as much as they may find helpful.

B

Traffic Analysis



Traffic Analysis

Columbia Town Center Short and Long Term Traffic Analysis September 2007 Sabra, Wang & Associates

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Howard County Government contracted with the consulting firm of Sabra, Wang & Associates to conduct a traffic study for Downtown Columbia. For the purposes of the study, the County provided sets of assumptions about potential development scenarios. It is important to note that these sets of assumptions are simply examples of possible development scenarios at varying levels of intensity. They do not represent any specific development plans for downtown.

Using these assumptions, the study evaluates the traffic capacity of the existing road network as well as several proposed road network improvements. The study recommends a number of road extensions, intersection and interchange improvements and the creation of a transportation management center to monitor and manage traffic operations. The study also highlights the importance of improvements to local and regional mass transit as well as improved connections for pedestrians and bicycles

to decrease dependence on individual automobiles and support a shift to other modes of transportation.

The following is the Executive Summary from the traffic study. The full traffic study report is available on line at www.howardcountymd.gov/downtowncolumbia.

In addition, a public presentation on the traffic study will be held on Thursday, October 11, 7:00 – 9:00 p.m. at Kahler Hall in Harper's Choice.



Sabra, Wang & Associates, Inc.
Engineers • Planners • Analysts



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Howard County Department of Public Works requested a comprehensive assessment of the traffic impact of planned and potential mixed-use development scenarios in the Columbia Town Center area in Howard County, Maryland to identify and aid in the programming of current and future capital projects required to improve the existing roadway network and meet future travel demand needs. The study network includes 18 intersections and 2 interchanges in and around the Town Center area primarily on Little Patuxent Parkway, Governor Warfield Parkway, Broken Land Parkway, Hickory Ridge Road and Cedar Lane. The report documents existing conditions including baseline traffic volumes, capacity and level of service, and identify of network deficiencies. An analysis of short-term (five to ten-year) and long-term (30-year) conditions is also performed including traffic projections under various development scenarios, future capacity and levels of service, and identification of future network improvements to maintain adequate mobility levels in the Town Center area.

The findings of this report demonstrate that all signalized intersections currently operate at acceptable levels of service, with the exception of Little Patuxent Parkway at Broken Land Parkway (PM level of service E). In addition, one stop-controlled movement, Wincopin Circle at Little Patuxent Parkway, (PM level of service F) and one weaving movement, eastbound Little Patuxent Parkway at US 29 ramps (PM level of service E) currently fail. New traffic signals, signal phasing modifications, and ramp modifications are suggested to mitigate existing year traffic back to an acceptable level of service.

A potential development program of 1,125 residential units, 1,100,000 square feet of office space, 420,000 square feet of retail space, 274,000 square feet of medical/ hospital space and 125 hotel rooms was evaluated for the short-term scenario. The short-term range is a five to 10 year horizon, which is defined for the purposes of this report as year 2014. The results of a travel forecasting analysis indicate that approximately 3,300 AM and 4,500 PM new peak hour vehicle trips will be added to the network by 2014. Under the short-term development scenario, three additional intersections and one additional ramp movement would deteriorate to failing conditions. New traffic signals, signal phasing modifications, added turn lanes, and ramp modifications are suggested to mitigate year 2014 traffic back to an acceptable level of service.

Beyond 2014, three development scenarios were evaluated:

- A high-intensity development program with an additional 4,375 residential units, 4,000,000 square feet of office space, 330,000 square feet of retail, and 425 hotel rooms to be built or redeveloped in the study area
- An medium-intensity development program with an additional 2,075 new dwelling units, 1,900,000 square feet of new office space, and 330,000 square feet of new retail to be built or redeveloped in the study area
- No additional development in the study area with a 1% annual growth in ambient external traffic volumes



The high-intensity development scenario is projected to generate an additional 5,750 AM and 7,340 PM peak hour vehicle trips. With the year 2014 improvements to the roadway network in place, and no transit improvements, thirteen of eighteen intersections will fail, including ten intersections along Little Patuxent Parkway, one intersection along South Entrance Road, one intersection along Cedar Lane, one intersection along Broken Land Parkway as well as four ramp movements at the US 29 interchanges. Under the medium intensity development scenario, eleven intersections will fail, while under the No Build scenario seven intersections will fail. Based on these findings, several improvement strategies are required beyond year 2014 to enhance network capacity, manage network demand, and increase access to alternative transportation modes.

The recommended improvements include:

- **Roadway extensions** of Wincopin Street, Hickory Ridge Road, Corporate Boulevard and South Entrance Road
- **Intersection improvements** such as added turn lanes at Governor Warfield Parkway, Wincopin Circle, Broken Land Parkway, Hickory Ridge Road, and Symphony Woods
- **Interchange improvements** along US 29/ South Entrance Road and US 29/ MD 175
- Creation of a County-wide **Transportation Management Center** to monitor and manage in real-time traffic operations and incidents using advanced traffic control technologies

These roadway improvements would mitigate all but one intersection to a level of service E or better. However, the intersection of Little Patuxent Parkway at Broken Land Parkway cannot be mitigated without major roadway widening or grade separation.

Further strategies to manage network demand, and increase access to alternative transportation modes include:

- New and improved **Pedestrian and bicycle** connections
- **Transit initiatives** such as the establishment of a Transportation Center, new shuttle service, satellite parking, shared parking and improved regional transit connections.



For information or alternative formats contact:

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